


Enhancing English Confidence and Well-Being in International Students: A Personalised Learning Approach

A/Prof Mira Kim

School of Humanities and Languages
Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture
UNSW Sydney



International Students in Higher Education

- **Over 4.5 million students enrolled in universities outside of their country of citizenship in 2012** (OECD, 2014 cited from Kettle 2017:1)
 - More than double the number in 2000
 - Almost 7% annual increase for the years from 2000 to 2012
 - **Over 5.3 million students in 2017** (Wikipedia)
 - Multiple contributing factors
 - Source countries' national priorities: economic and social interconnectedness
 - Students' aspirations: knowledge, jobs and English
- 

Australia

- “Australia’s percentage of international students within its tertiary cohort is the highest in the world – 19.8% or almost one-fifth (OECD, 2013a)” – Kettle (2017:3)
- 3rd largest export
 - \$18.8 billion in 2014
 - \$37.6 billion in 2018

(Australian Bureau of Statistics cited from Ministers’ Media Centre 2019 November)

Sector	2018	2019	2020
Higher Education	319,263	360,251	362,353
VET	163,976	189,839	220,254
Schools	22,077	21,366	19,380
ELICOS	88,000	89,398	76,714
Non-award	31,289	30,079	27,541
Grand Total	624,605	690,933	706,242

Source: Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021



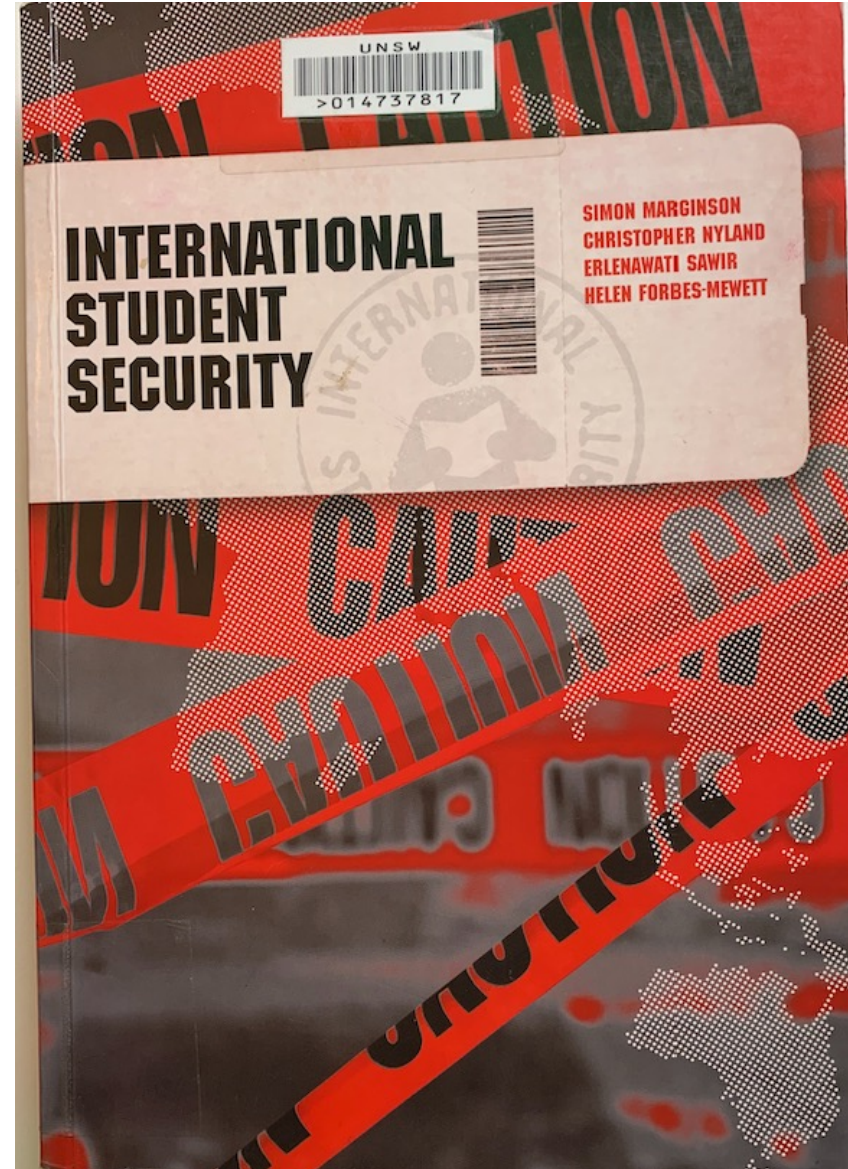
Studying overseas
experiences



International Students in Australia

- Cultural differences
- Alienation, social exclusion, racial discrimination
- Financial needs and homesickness
- Language barrier

(Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, Forbes-Mewett 2016)



Language Barrier: dominant perceived problem of students

Academic
difficulties

Psychological
anxiety

Social
exclusion

(Line et al. 2000 and Zhang & Mi, 2010)



English Language Proficiency

A remediation approach

- Through academic literacy
- **English language centres**

Raise English language requirements

Experience approach

- Post-Entry Language Assessment (PELA)
 - Low student attendance and engagement levels (Roche Couste & Oliver, 2014)
 - The danger of perpetuating the deficit discourse (Benzie, 2010; Haugh, 2016)
- Discipline-specific embedded literacy model
 - The programs developed at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales (Mort & Drury, 2012) and the University of Canberra (Kennelly, Maldoni & Davies, 2010).
 - Low attendance (Kennelly et al) (Arkoudis et al., 2012)
 - Staff complexities
- DELNA



A new approach needed

- Diverse needs of multilingual students (also local students) at advanced levels of English language proficiency
- One-size-fits all approach does not work; a **different approach** is needed
- Deficit view of 'poor' English language skills of international students
- Improving English language skills is an on-going process; a **sustainable approach** is needed

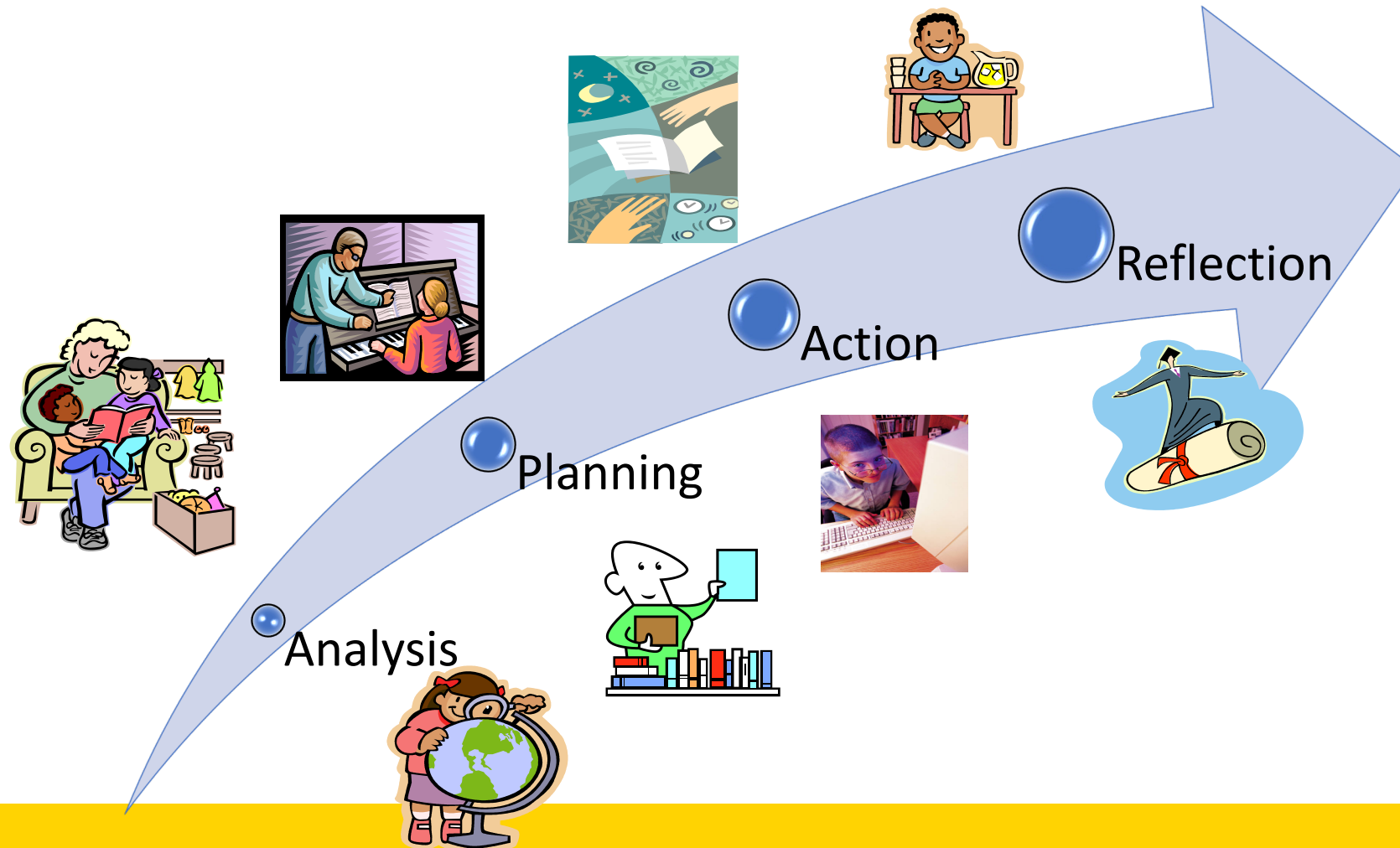
(Arkoudis, 2015; Benzie, 2010)

Personalised English Language Enhancement

- 2015 UNSW Strategic Educational Development Grants (SEF#2)
 - English Language Acquisition Support for International Students (ELASIS)
 - \$171,000
 - PA model (Kim 2014, Kim and Jing 2019)
 - Trial run of PELE in 2016
 - Credit-bearing course since 2017



Personalised Autonomous (PA) Model



PA Learning Cycle and Assessments



Foundational Principles in the PA model

- Language learning is not skill development but ability to communicate in context.
- Learning is most efficient when learners are motivated and guided in a safe environment.
- Strong interface between explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge
- Little knowledge about advanced language learning

Research Design (Kim 2023)

- Surveys (entry and exit)
 - Self-perceived confidence
 - Self-efficacy for self-directed English learning, classroom & social engagement
 - PELE impacts and satisfaction
 - Sense of belonging
- Focus group interviews

Major findings

- Significant improvement of self-perceived confidence in English language skills for both academic and everyday contexts
 - Academic speaking
 - Academic writing
- Significant improvement of self-efficacy
 - Self-directed English learning
 - Classroom engagement
 - Social engagement
- PELE satisfaction (4.16 out of 5)
- Self-perceived impacts of PELE
 - Motivation to study (74%: 4 or 5)
 - Confidence in themselves (68%: 4 or 5)
 - Language learning (62%: 4 or 5)
- Strong sense of community
 - Positive impact on their performance in other courses (81%: 4 or 5)
 - Important part of their learning experience at UNSW (77%: 4 or 5)
 - Feel valuable member of the PELE community (66%: 4 or 5)
- Significant correlations between students' ratings of belonging to PELE, faculties and the University

N=447 (2018-2020)

Paired-samples t-tests

P<0.5 (Statistically significant)

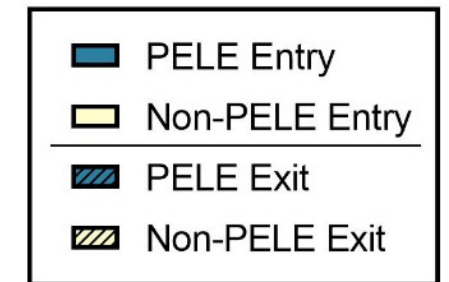
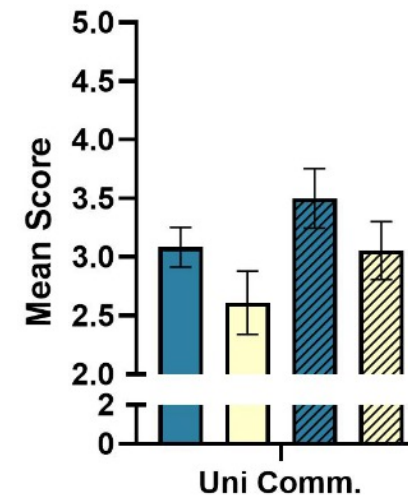
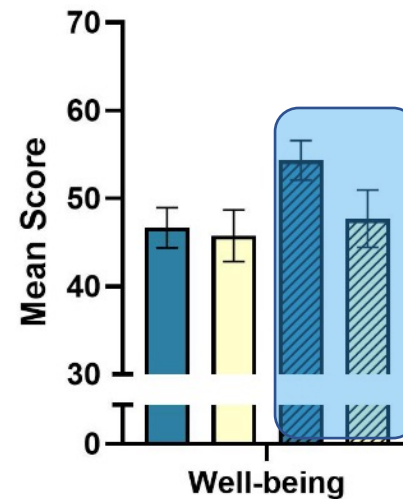
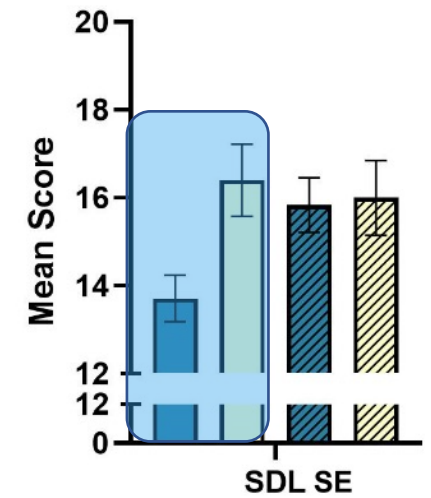
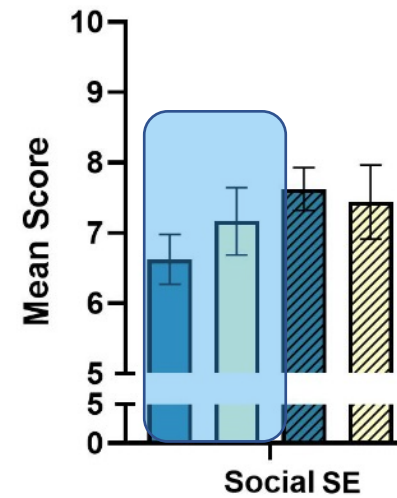
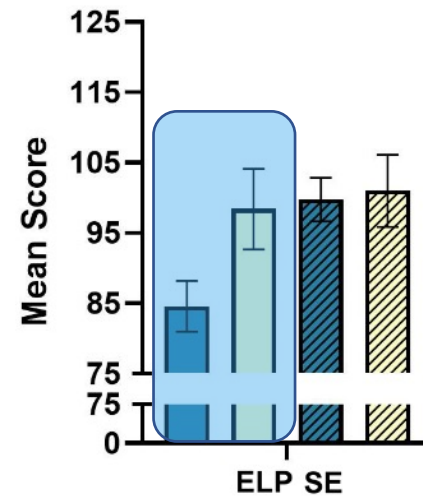


PELE FOLLOW-UP STUDIES (2021-22)

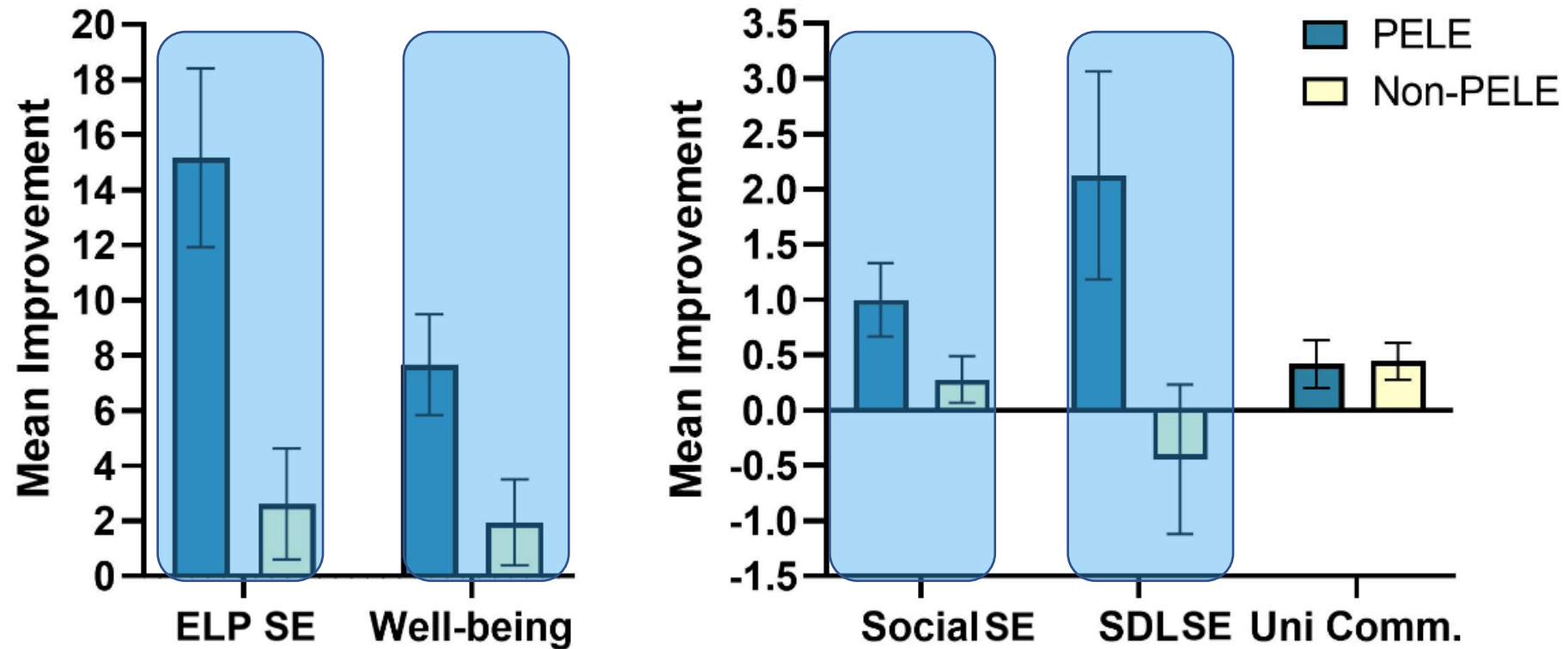
- Collaboration with GRS and Business School
- Further investigation into
 - English self-efficacy (PELE vs non-PELE)
 - Self-directed learning self-efficacy (PELE vs non-PELE)
 - Social self-efficacy (PELE vs non-PELE)
 - Well-being (PELE vs non-PELE)
 - Sense of belonging (PELE vs non-PELE)
- Paired-sample t-tests

	PELE	Non-PELE
UG	24	18
PG	13	20
HDR	62	35

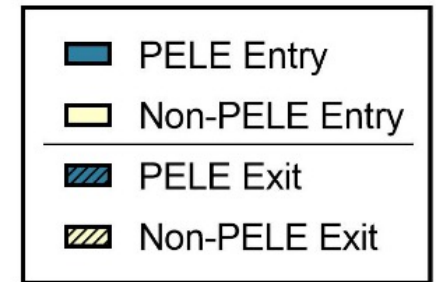
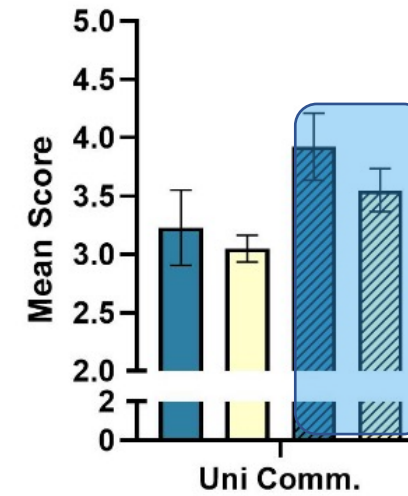
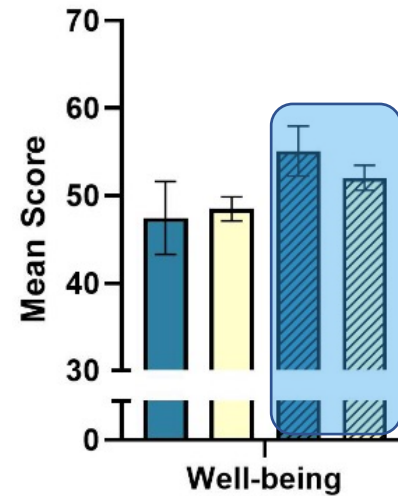
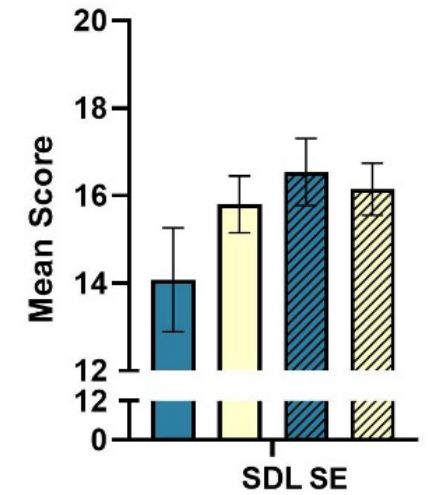
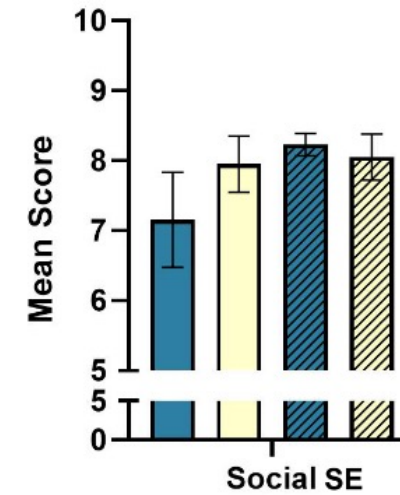
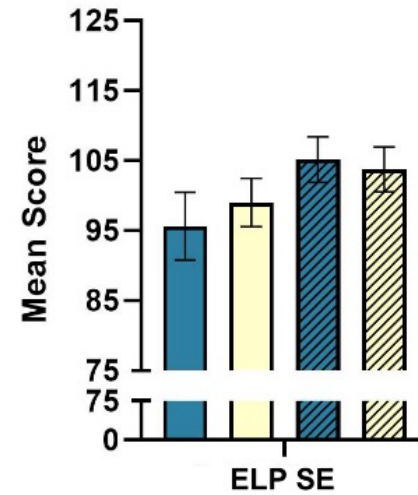
Comparison of mean scores between PELE and non-PELE at entry and exit (UG)



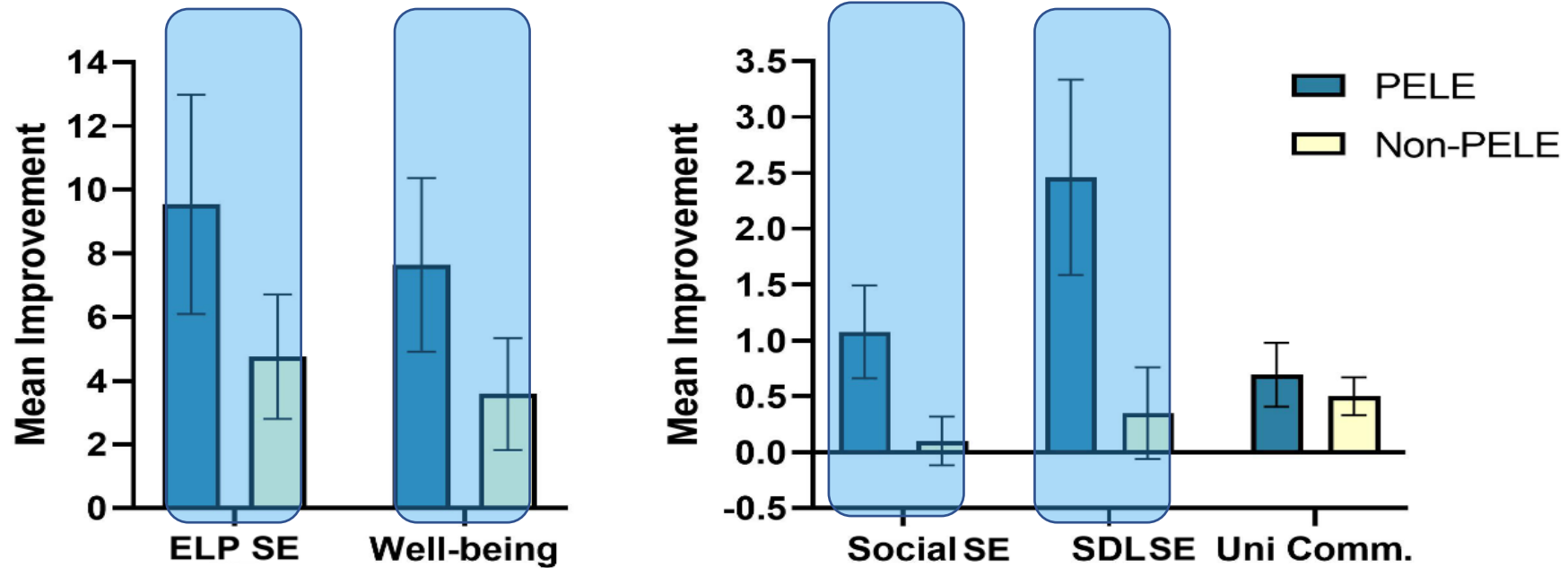
Comparison of improvements (UG)



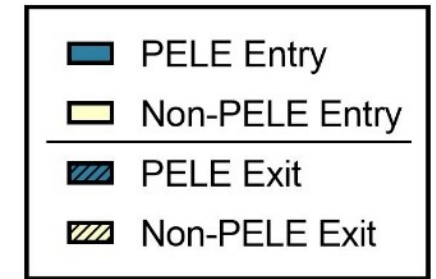
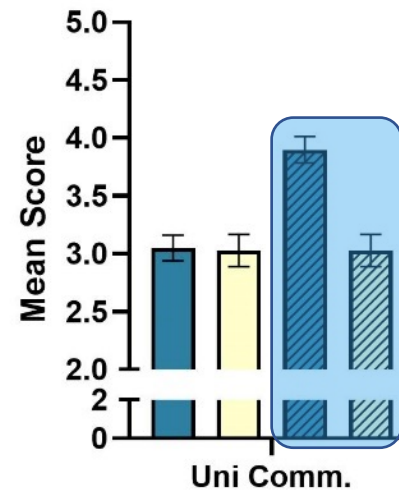
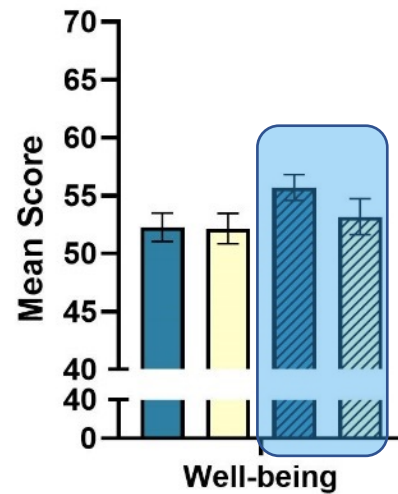
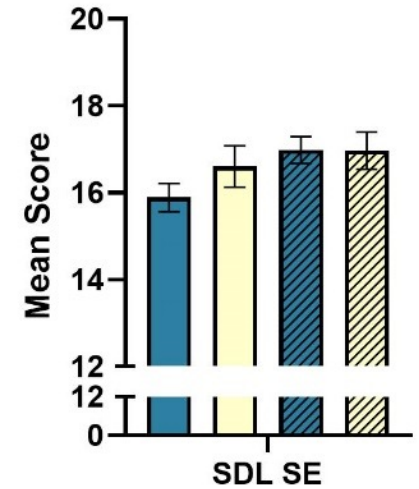
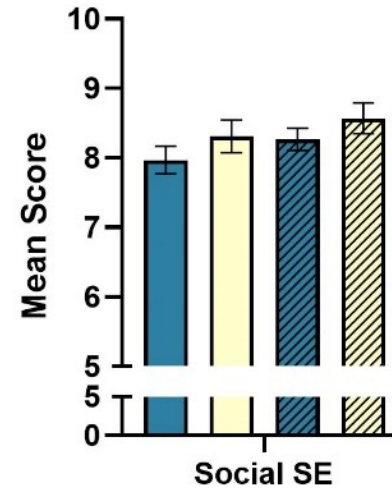
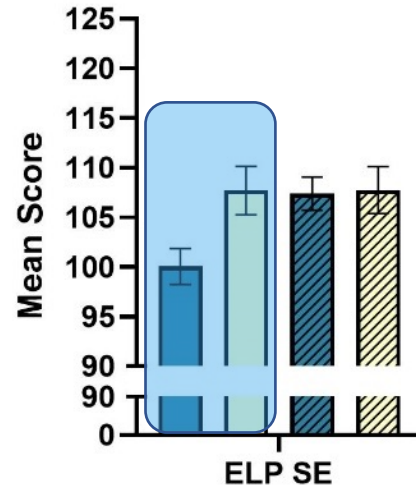
Comparison of mean scores between PELE and non-PELE at entry and exit (PG)



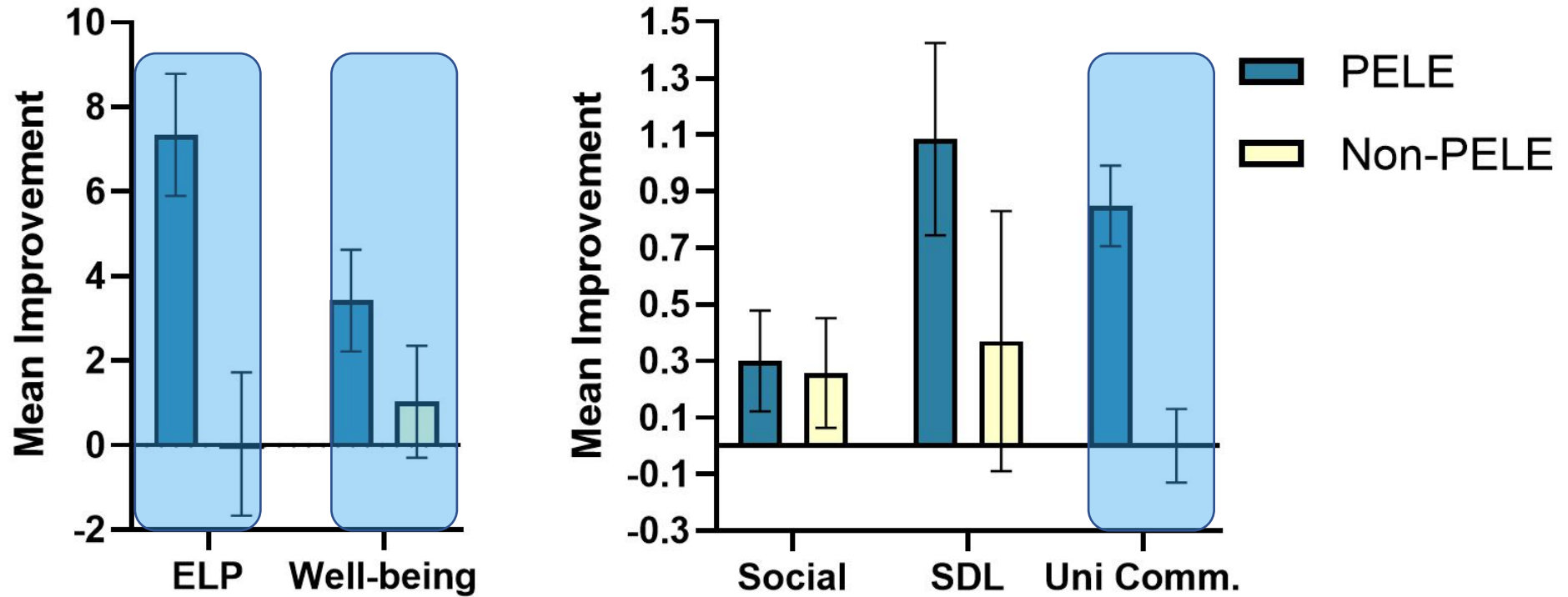
Comparison of improvements (PG)



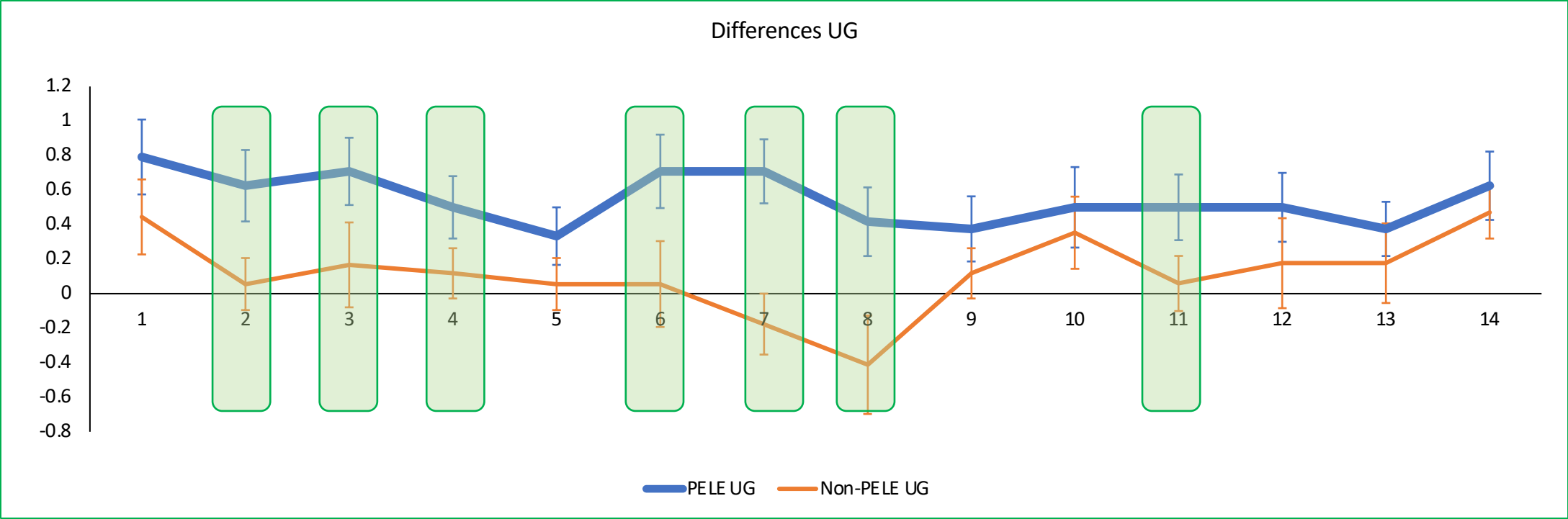
Comparison of mean scores between PELE and non-PELE at entry and exit (HDR)



Comparison of improvements (HDR)

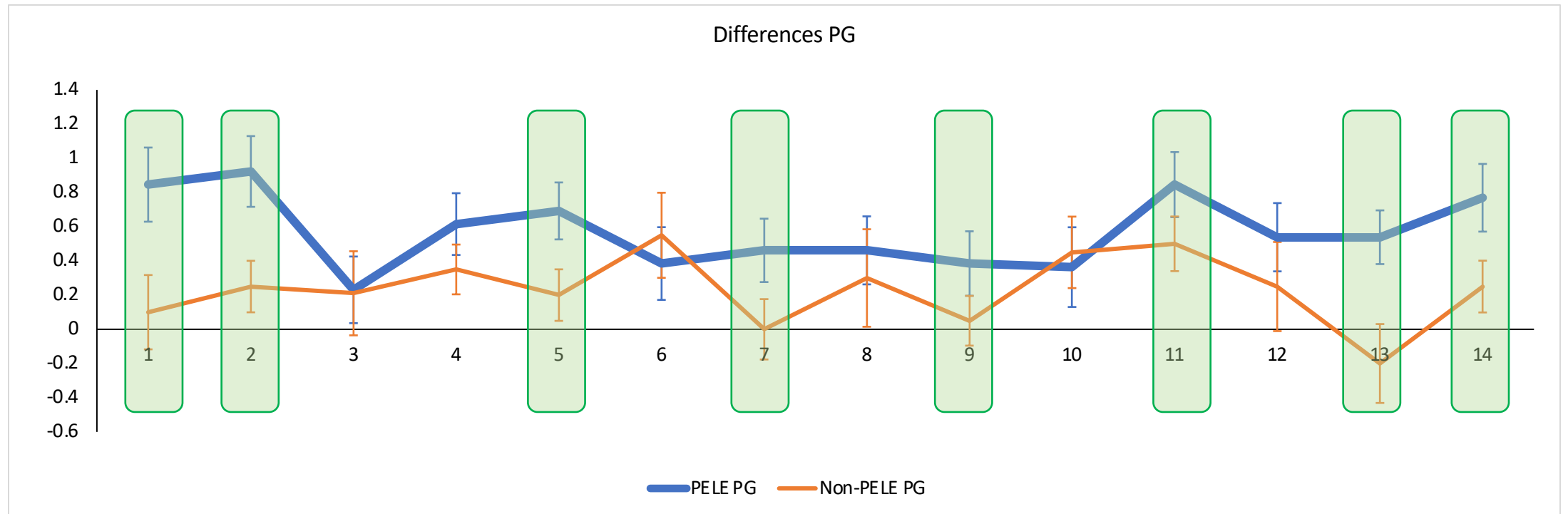


UG Wellbeing Improvements

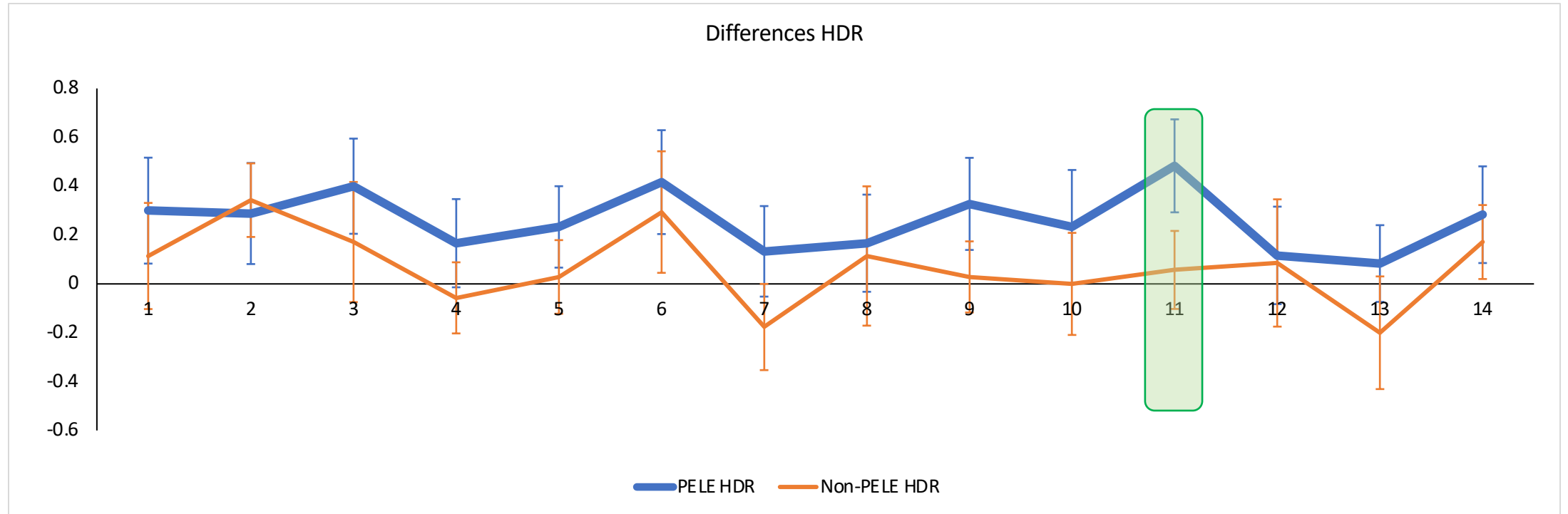


Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al., 2007)

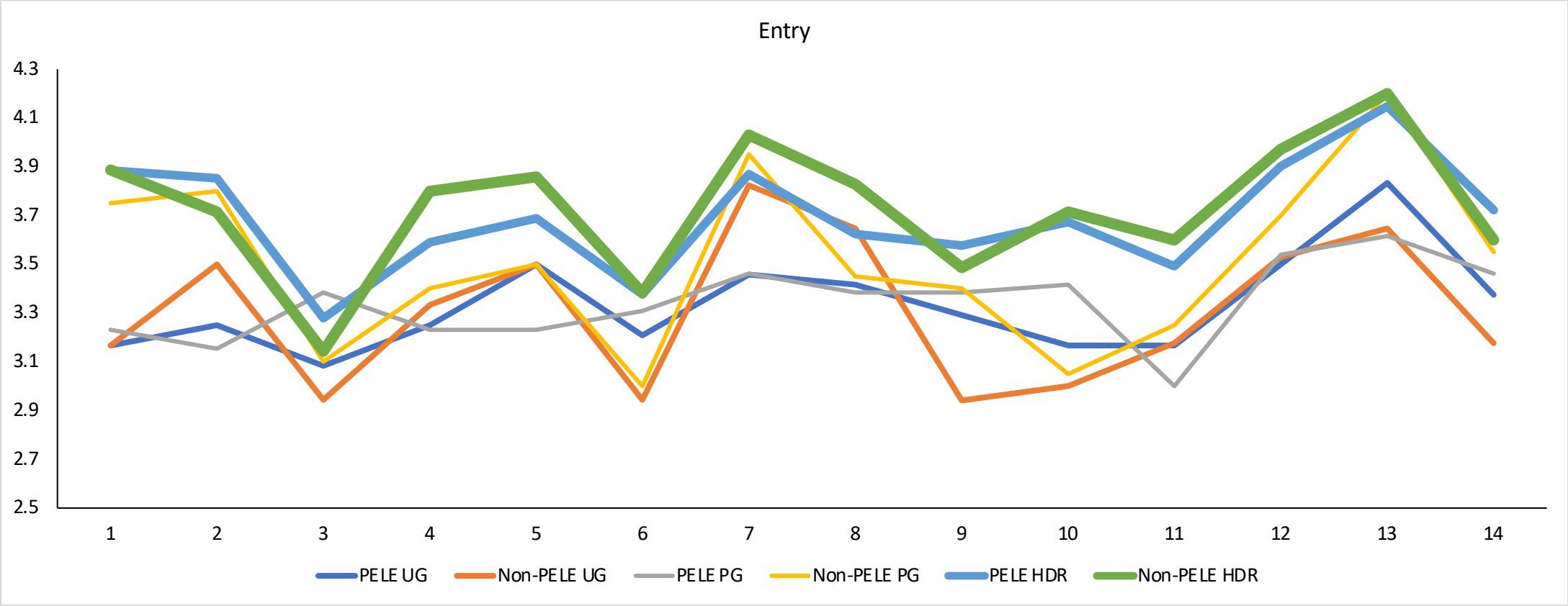
PG Wellbeing Improvements



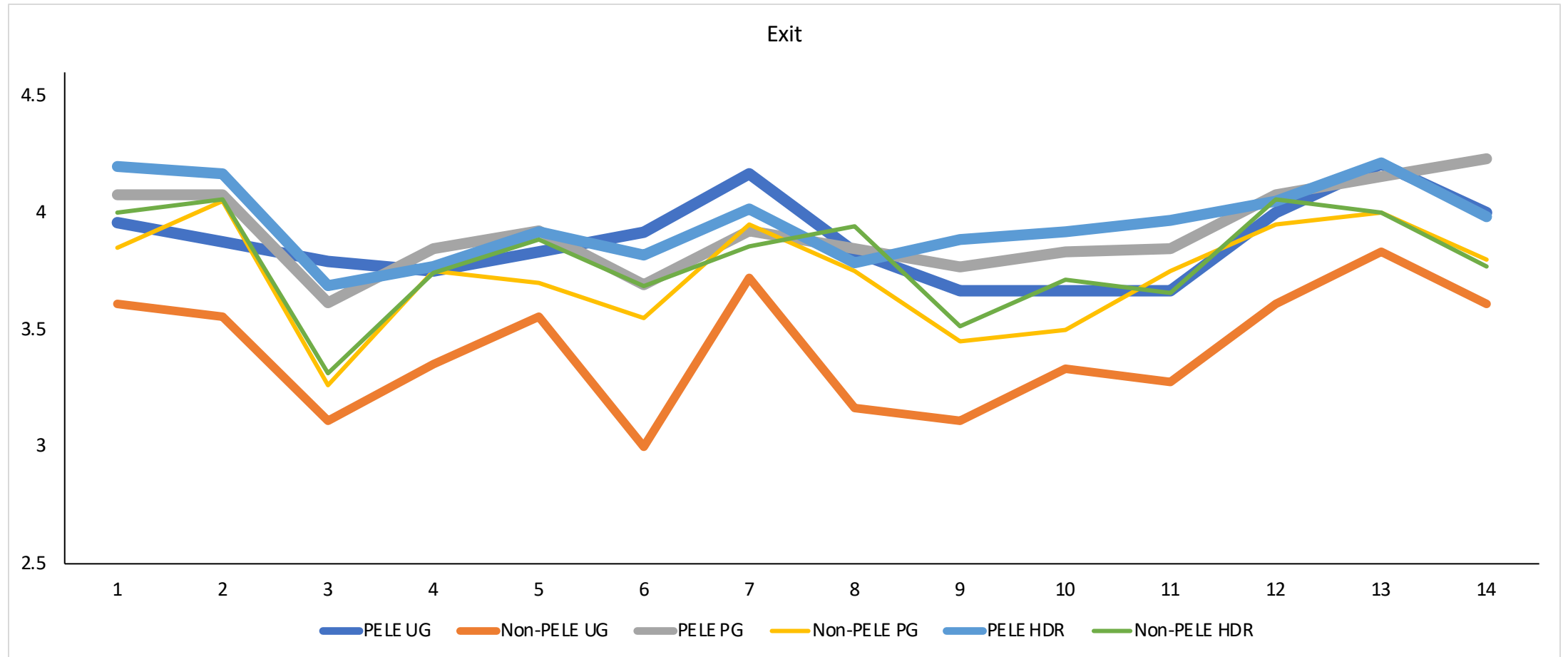
HDR Wellbeing Improvements



Entry Wellbeing Results



Exit Wellbeing Results

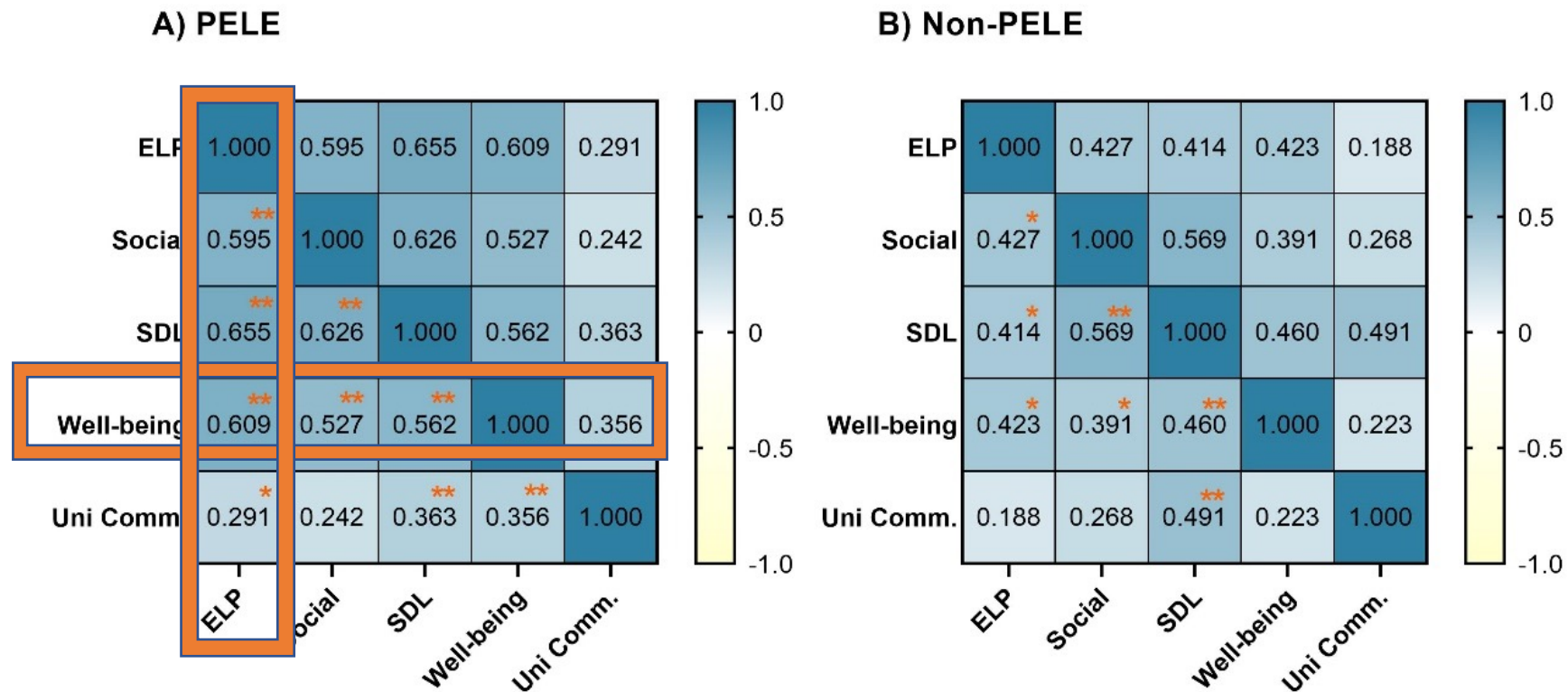


Well-being areas in which showed PELE students significant differences between entry and exit

Well-being questions		UG	PG	HDR
1	I've been feeling optimistic about the future.		**	
2	I've been feeling useful.			
3	I've been feeling relaxed.	*		
4	I've been dealing with problems well.			-
5	I've been thinking clearly.			
6	I've been feeling close to other people.	*		
7	I've been able to make up my own mind about things.	**/-		-
8	I've been feeling interested in other people	*/--		
9	I've had energy to spare			
10	I've been feeling good about myself			-
11	I've been feeling confident	**	**	**
12	I've been feeling loved			
13	I've been interested in new things		**/-	-
14	I've been feeling cheerful			

HDR group

Correlation matrices presenting Pearson's r values for correlations between all measures. Single asterisk represents significance at the .05 level, double asterisks represent significance at the .01 level.



Virtuous Cycle of Confidence



It was clear in PELE focus groups that increased confidence in ELP often corresponded with well-being. As students began to see evidence of their improvements, their self-beliefs in their English skills improved, and they consequently experienced improved affect and functioning in their studies and interpersonal relationships at university (the constituents of well-being).

Sources of improved confidence and self-efficacy

*“So actually I think the most important factor that make me confident is that I made a lot of progress in the actual situation. Also, **when I found that I can use strategies in this authentic situation, it makes me feel more confident**”.*

*“When I was doing my conversational speaking project, **I can feel that I spent less time reacting to other's sentences**. In my social clubs, I initiated more conversations than before. At first, maybe in the whole session, I only speak five or four short sentences, but when it's near the end of the term, I think I can just spoke freely with people. But maybe it's because I got more familiar with them, but also I suppose it's the result of my project as well”.*

Sources of improved confidence and self-efficacy

*“Before I rarely know any **strategies** for reading English and also like I’m not a fan of reading, even in my mother tongue. This taught me a lot strategies and also improved my effectiveness in reading. I've also had the evidence that it actually helped. It helped cut off my reading time a lot yeah so that's quite helpful”.*

*“I've learned **self-reflection** and critical thinking in my personalized project. I found that very useful **because actually before I usually just practiced my English without any reflection and without any assessment of my progress**, I just keep practicing. After this course, I found that it's more important to do other things than practicing.*

Sustainable learning

*“It’s totally different from my perception because it’s a personalized project. I think I learned a lot about self-exploration and self-growth from this course. **Even after the course, I also did my other personalized planned projects as well.**”*

After PELE, I’m doing my personalized listening project. I designed another project again, and I was using the ... was using the same method I used to do before, but I found that with my reflection, this time I improved a lot quicker than before”.

Well-being

*...first I'm **not that a social person** and second is like...**worry too much when I speak in English** and I was worried about like if i'm not saying the right thing not saying in the correct grammar and like worrying about if others could understand me...**I mean it prevent me to speak English fluently or willing to talk to other person in English.***

*I mean after doing this project ... I **prefer to talking to a person face to face** because and also so you could see the reaction from others and actually I think that helped me to know more, and also to learn more from others ...*

Well-being

“Yeah for me, I guess, this term actually changed me a lot as like before I always stayed up late because I study computer science and we like to code at night, and probably like overnight and just coding. And that's really unhealthy”

“But after this term doing PELE I can communicate with others and I'm feeling positive and actually my mom and I like always go out for a walk after dinner so like while doing this, this project, because that helps us, we could talk to each other, and we could also keep us fit”.

What I have learned

Obstacles

- Anxiety and fear
- Deficient discourse
- Lack of self-directed learning skills
- Lack of awareness of useful resources
- Lack of community

PELE

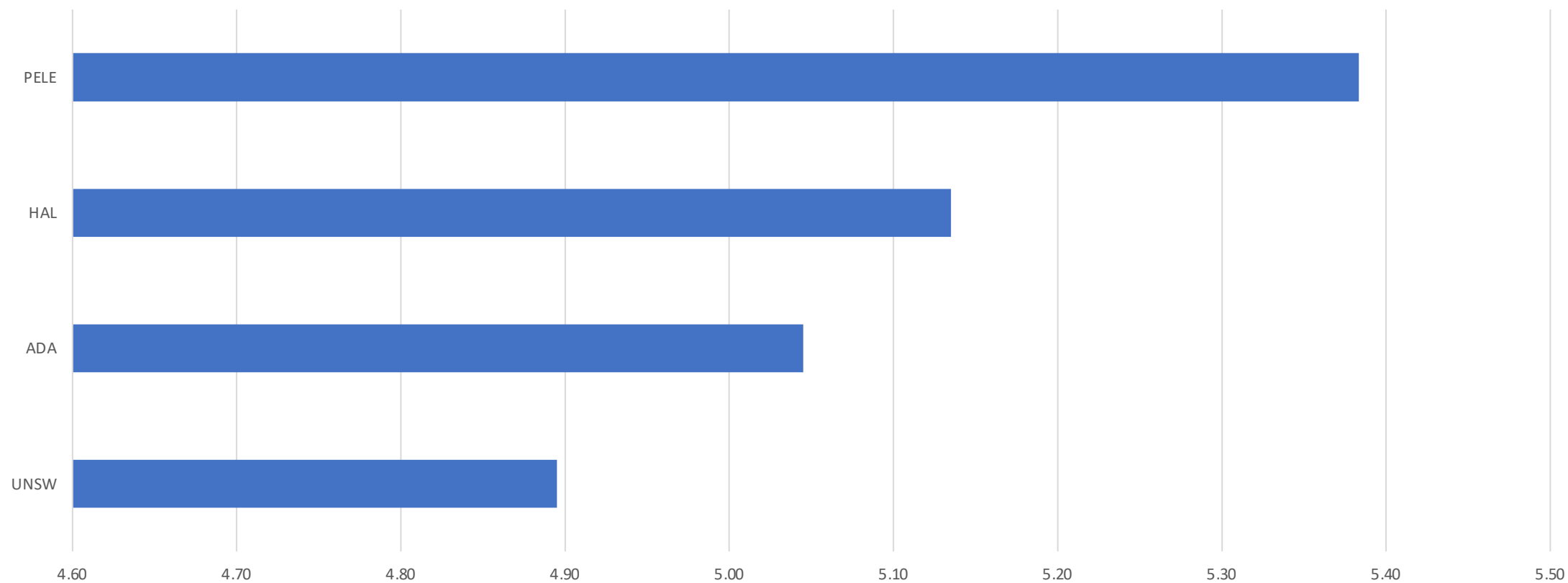
- **Autonomy** to decide what they want to do
- Provide a **safe**, non-judgmental learning environment for all
- **Scaffolding** for efficient learning
- Role models for life-long learning

Students

- Are **willing** to get out of their comfort zone
- Engage with others
- **Get more competent**
- **Get more confident**
- Go the extra mile for themselves and others
- Develop a **strong sense of belonging**

Students' Satisfaction during COVID

PELE MyExprience (2020-2022)



Concluding

- International students' English language proficiency is NOT a singular, isolated linguistic challenge but closely related to their psychological well-being that has significant impact on their willingness to engage socially and academically
- Consistently viewing language development through a remedial lens can inadvertently generate adverse outcomes
- A more inclusive and effective educational experience is needed, acknowledging the complexities of language acquisition and the intrinsic connection to broader personal academic growth.
- While the PELE approach presents a viable alternative for supporting students' English language development, it is not the sole solution. We need to collaborate to keep exploring innovative ways of supporting our EAL international students so that they can thrive.

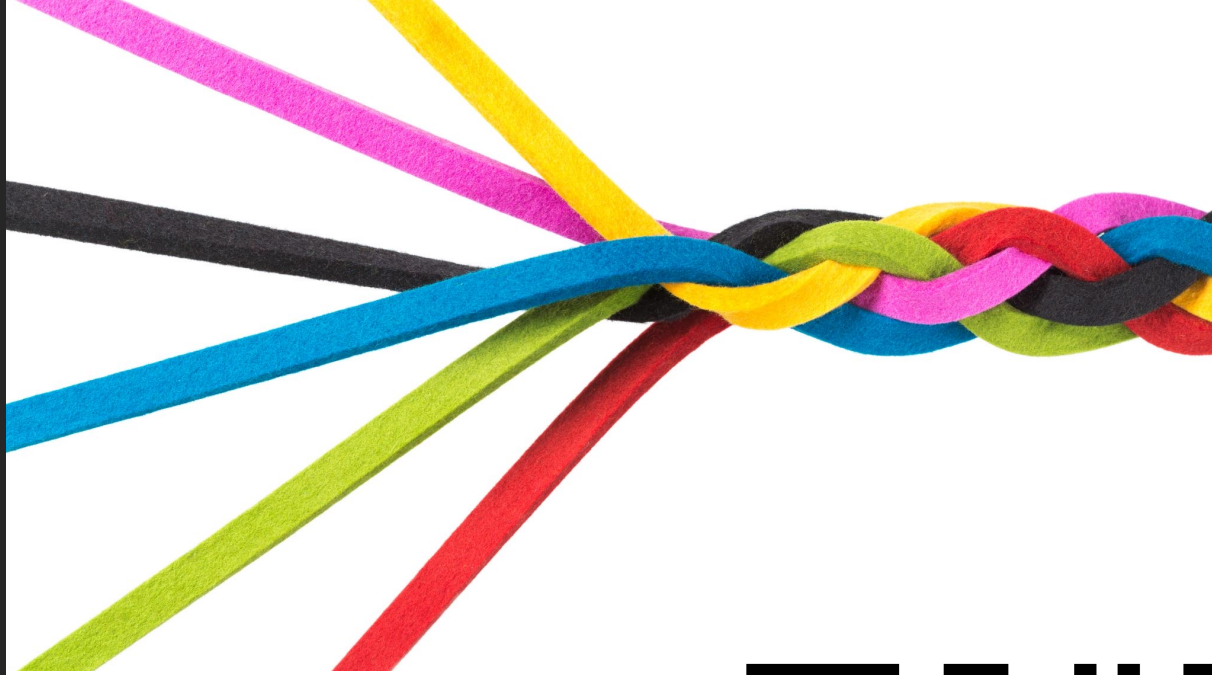


DID YOU?

Watch Jaqi's and Gwyn's videos
on presentation skills on OL

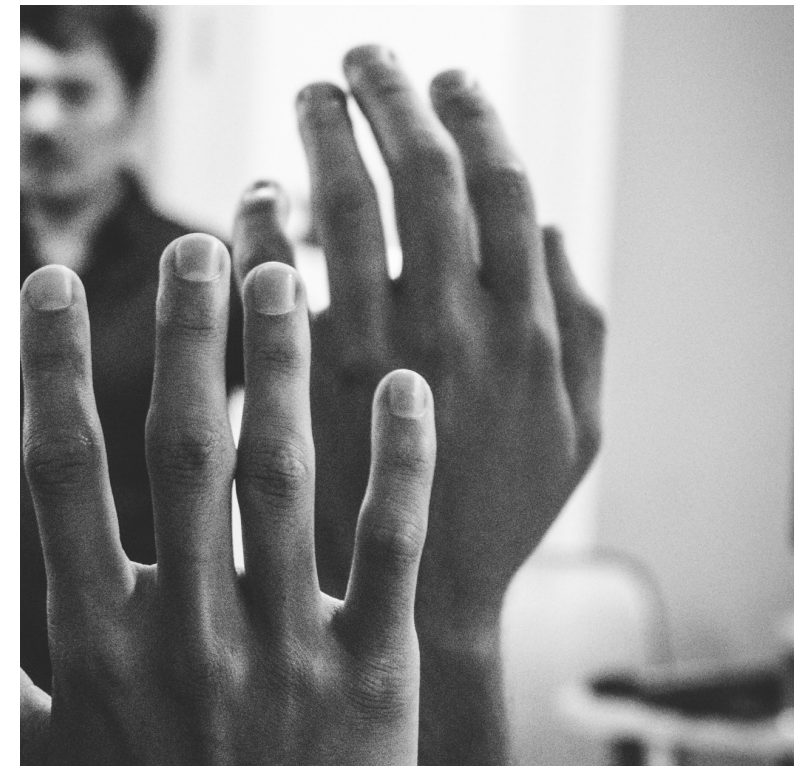
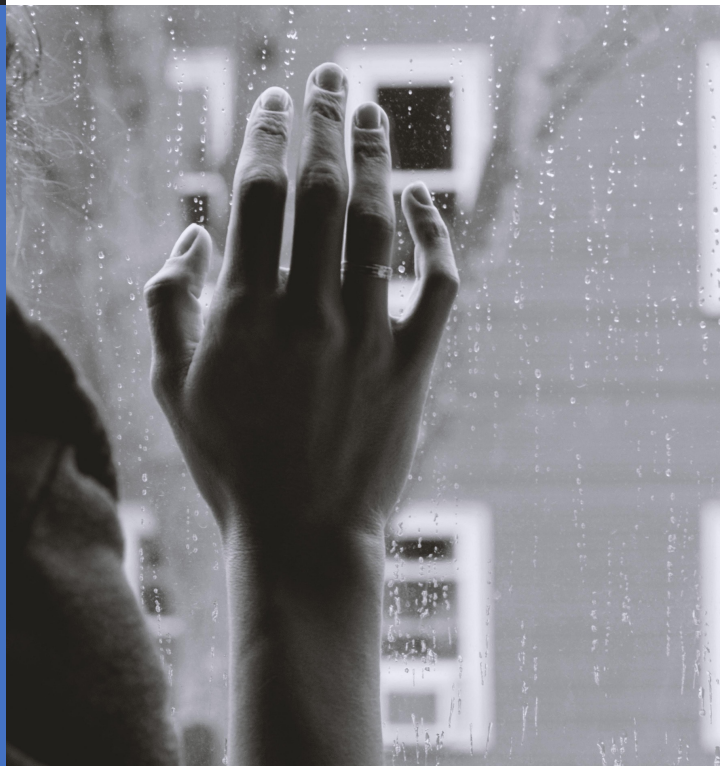
Bring your draft PPT for
rehearsal

© 2022 Mira Kim



Collaboration

mira.kim@unsw.edu.au



References

- Kim, M. (2023). A personalised autonomous model to resolve a prolonged dilemma in international students' English language needs in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(3), 603-618.
- Kim, M., Black, S & Cliff, J. (under review) Enhancing English Confidence and Well-Being in International Students: A Personalised Learning Approach.
- Kim, M., Cliff, J. & Strutt, A. (under review) Enhancing English Language Proficiency and Well-being in EAL International PhD Students: The Impact of Personalised Autonomous Learning

References

- Arkoudis, S., Baik, C., & Richardson, S. (2012). *English language standards in higher education: From entry to exit*. Camberwell: ACER Press.
- Arkoudis, S. (2015, April 20). More international students should mean more support for communication and interaction. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <http://theconversation.com>
- Benzie, H. (2010). Graduating as a 'native speaker': International students and English language proficiency in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 29(4), 447-459.
- Haugh, M. (2016). Complaints and troubles talk about the English language skills of international students in Australian universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 35(4), 727-740.
- Kettle M. (2017). *International Student Engagement in Higher Education*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Kennelly, R., Maldoni, A., & Davies, D. (2010). A case study: Do discipline-based programmes improve student learning outcomes? *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 6(1), 61-73.
- Kim, M. (2014). 'Action Research on Advanced Bilingual Enhancement in Translator Education', in K. Kunz, E. Teich, S. Hansen-Schirra, S. Neumann and P. Daut (eds), *Caught in the Middle – Language Use and Translation*, Saarbrücken: Saarland University Press, pp. 195-213.
- Marginson, S., C. Nyland, E. Sawir and H. Forbes-Mewett (2010). *International Student Security*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Mort, P. & Drury, H. (2012). Supporting student academic literacy in the disciplines using genre-based online pedagogy. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 6(3), 1-15.
- Rochecouste, J., & Oliver, R. (2014). English Language Growth and the International Student. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, 1, 63-82.

